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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/CARC AND IO

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SUBJECT: ARMENIA SEEKS U.S. SUPPORT FOR ELECTION TO HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

REF: YEREVAN 0424

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1. (SBU) On March 28, Deputy Foreign Minister Armen Baiburtian convoked CDA to request U.S. support for Armenia's candidacy as a member of the UN's new Human Rights Council. In addition to presenting a formal note (text at para 4 below), DFM Baiburtian said that Armenia's strong performance for two years on the Human Rights Commission -- including one year as Vice Chair -- demonstrated that Armenia had the experience necessary for selection. Baiburtian said that Armenia's voting record at the Commission and its management of human rights issues in general underscored Armenia's "Western Approach" to working in international organizations.

2. (SBU) DFM Baiburtian said that election at the May 9 session of the UNGA was a very high priority of Armenia's foreign policy and that it is pursuing all avenues to garner support for election. Baiburtian told us he is aware that Armenia is one of at least ten candidates competing for the six seats to represent Eastern Europe on the Human Rights Council. While the EU will officially support all of its member states, Baiburtian said that Armenia already had bilateral commitments of support from individual EU members. In response to our query, Baiburtian said that it would be "very bad" for Armenia if Azerbaijan was elected and Armenia was not; Azerbaijan already had the support of the Organization of Islamic Countries.

3. (SBU) We assured Baiburtian that we would forward his request for support to Washington, and reminded him of U.S. policy to make no commitments prior to voting. Armenia's suitability for election would likely be based on its voting record in the UNHRC and on its own human rights record. We told Baiburtian that proposals for logrolling (ref) probably did not help Armenia's suit. Baiburtian acknowledged that Armenia's track record would be the most important factor, but again called attention to Armenia's experience on the UNHRC and its readiness to support calls for "peer review" human rights practices.

4. (U) Begin text of March 28 MFA diplomatic note:

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia presents its compliments to the Embassy of the United States of America in Yerevan and has the honour to inform that the Government of the Republic of Armenia has decided to present its candidature for the elections to the newly established Human Rights Council, to be held on 9 May, 2006, during the 60th session of the General Assembly.

The Republic of Armenia is strongly committed to the promotion and protection of human rights and has worked consistently and constructively to this end at the national, regional and international levels. In recognition of and adherence to its duty to promote and protect human rights and all fundamental freedoms, the Government of Armenia has over the past years been significantly committed to developing sound legal and operational human rights machinery at a national level. A continuous reform process has paved the way for Armenia's accession to the Council of Europe and implementation of the commitments undertaken upon membership.

Armenia has been successfully delivering on its national and international obligations to promote protection systems in Armenia. Over a short period of time Armenia reformed its penitentiary system, abolished death penalty, provided legal and institutional frameworks to promote the rights of conscientious objectors, and fundamentally expanded legal and institutional frameworks for promoting all major rights and freedoms of individuals and groups.

With the amendment of its Constitution in November 2005 Armenia further entrenched the human rights in its legal frameworks by expanding the human rights provisions and streamlining them with the international norms and standards, as well as with Armenia's obligations under respective international legal instruments. The right to appeal to the

Constitutional Court on matters of human rights has been extended to individual persons.

Armenia is a party to all major international legal instruments on human rights and consistently delivers on its obligations under such instruments and extensively co-operates with all human rights bodies and procedures.

Armenia has equally been committed to comprehensive and universal promotion and protection of all human rights at global and regional levels. Armenia's efforts in this regard have been duly recognized and supported by the international community, with the support of which Armenia was elected to the UN Commission on Human Rights in 2002 and subsequently re-elected in 2005.

Armenia firmly believes that peace, security, development and human rights are strongly interlinked and mutually reinforcing. Promotion of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development is crucial in this regard. Armenia is determined to contribute to further enhancing co-operation and dialogue among nations and regions.

Armenia is committed to enhancing the international human rights promotion and protection systems by strengthening its machinery and improving special procedures and mechanisms.

While Armenia is in full recognition of the principle of universality, impartiality, objectivity and non-selectivity, constructive international dialogue and co-operation in the field of human rights, it firmly supports the objective of undertaking universal periodic review of the fulfillment of human rights obligations and commitments by each state. In putting forward its candidature for the Human Rights Council, Armenia is open for such review of its own human rights obligations and record of promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Armenia remains fully supportive of further strengthening the operational capacity and mandates of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and commits to further support the Office through voluntary contributions. In confirmation of its commitments, Armenia extends an open invitation to all special procedures established in the past which will be transferred to the Human Rights Council.

The Government of Armenia would highly appreciate the invaluable support of the Government of the United States to Armenia's candidature and would like to assure that if elected, Armenia will continue to do its utmost to enhance cooperation on the issues of human rights among all UN Member States.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Embassy of the United States of America in Yerevan the assurances of its highest consideration.

End Text.
GODFREY